

Egypt crackdown sparks outrage

AFP, Paris

Egypt's bloody crackdown on supporters of ousted president Mohamed Morsi triggered widespread condemnation on Wednesday as the international community reacted with alarm to the deepening crisis.

The United States strongly condemned Egyptian forces' bloody crackdown on protesters and denounced the imposition of a state of emergency.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest urged the Egyptian military to show restraint after a crackdown on supporters of deposed elected president Mohamed Morsi.

"The United States strongly condemns the use of violence against protesters in Egypt," Earnest told reporters.

"Violence will only make it more difficult to move Egypt forward on a path to lasting stability and democracy and runs directly counter to the pledges by the interim government to pursue reconciliation," he said.

Europe's leading powers along with Iran, Qatar and Turkey strongly denounced the use of force by the military-backed interim government to clear two protest camps in Cairo.

The action has resulted in 149 deaths, according to Egyptian health ministry.

"I am deeply concerned at the escalating violence and unrest in Egypt," British Foreign Secretary William Hague said in a statement. "I condemn the use of force in clearing protests and call on the security forces to act with restraint."

Qatar, a main backer of the pro-Morsi Muslim Brotherhood, issued a similar message.

Turkey -- which had developed strong ties with Morsi's government -- urged the international community to act immediately over what it said was an "unacceptable" response to the protests.

"The international community, particularly the UN Security Council and Arab League, must act immediately to stop this massacre," the prime minister's office said in a statement.

Iran also termed the crackdown a "massacre".

France and Germany refrained from apportioning blame for the crisis, calling for calm from both sides.

The European Union also appealed for restraint, with EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton's spokesman saying: "Confrontation and violence are not the way forward."



1. An Egyptian riot policeman points his gun towards protesters in a huge protest camp in eastern Cairo yesterday. 2. A Morsi-supporter targets a homemade gun at security forces. 3. Protesters push-off an armoured-car from a bridge in Cairo and 4. A protester with a AK47 rifle during the clashes.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS



ElBaradei resigns

AFP, Cairo

Egyptian vice president, Nobel laureate Mohamed ElBaradei, announced his resignation in a letter to the interim president on Wednesday seen by AFP.

The resignation comes after scores were killed in a crackdown by security forces on loyalists of ousted Islamist president Mohamed Morsi.

"It has become too difficult to continue bearing responsibility for decisions I do not agree with and whose consequences fear," ElBaradei said.

He said his conscience was troubled over the loss of life "particularly as I believe it could have been avoided".

"Unfortunately those who gain from what happened today are those who call for violence and terror, the extremist groups," he said.

Meanwhile, hundreds of angry supporters of ousted president Mohamed Morsi marched through Egypt's second city of Alexandria yesterday rioting and armed with wooden clubs, an AFP reporter said.

In the Ibrahimiya district, they stormed a police station and looted furniture and equipment inside, an AFP reporter said.

Earlier, in another part of Alexandria, tear gas canisters rained down on a pro-Morsi march in the Sharq neighbourhood, amid repeated bursts of automatic gunfire.

NEWS IN brief

Quake in Tibet leaves 87 injured

PTI, Beijing

At least 87 people were injured and over 45,000 houses damaged when a 6.1 magnitude earthquake jolted parts of Tibet yesterday.

The quake was followed by several aftershocks, official media said.

Traffic is expected to resume in the affected areas as rescuers have cleared most of the roads, Xinhua

Mass suicide attempt in China

PTI, Beijing

A group of 10 people in China yesterday attempted to commit suicide together by drinking pesticide, protesting against the government's decision to abolish the railway ministry.

China has recently abolished once flourishing railway ministry, a major employer, as it sustained huge losses and merged with the transport ministry,

CIA spied on Noam Chomsky

IANS, Washington

The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has admitted to having amassed data on MIT linguistics professor and government critic Noam Chomsky during the 1970s, Foreign Policy magazine's The Cable blog said on Tuesday.

For years, the CIA responded to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests about Chomsky by claiming it had no records relevant to the query, The Cable noted.

Dated June 8, 1970, the CIA document said the journey to Hanoi had the "endorsement of Noam

UN probes N Korea arms shipment

BBC ONLINE

UN officials have begun inspecting an arms shipment found on a North Korean ship, Panama's security minister said yesterday.

The Chong Chon Gang was seized last month on the Panama Canal.

Inspectors looking for drugs found Cuban arms and two Soviet-made MiG-

ME peace talks resume under settlement cloud

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators met late yesterday in Jerusalem for a new round of direct peace talks after a three-year break, local media said, as pessimism ran deep on both sides.

There was no confirmation from Israeli or Palestinian officials who were maintaining a news blackout on details of the encounter.

Palestinian officials had earlier told AFP that negotiators would meet in the prestigious King David hotel, but reports in Haaretz newspaper and on Israeli public radio did not name the location.

The meeting was being overshadowed by Israeli plans to build thousands of new homes for Jewish settlers on land which the Palestinians claim for their promised future state.

Israel freed 26 Palestinian prisoners

yesterday but also pledged to keep up the pace of settlement building on occupied land.

Those released from jail were the first batch of 104 prisoners, most of whom had been serving life terms for killing Israelis, who are to be freed in stages depending on progress in the talks.

But as Palestinians celebrated the releases, Housing Minister Uri Ariel cast a pall over proceedings.

"We will build thousands of homes in the coming year in Judea and Samaria," Ariel told public radio, using the biblical Hebrew term for the West Bank.

"No one dictates where we can build... This is just the first course," he added, hinting at more building to come.

His remarks came as the negotiating teams readied for the talks, the result of marathon efforts by US Secretary of State John Kerry, who convened an

initial meeting between the sides in Washington on July 30.

Although the prisoner release overnight Tuesday was welcomed by the Palestinians, it did little to placate their anger after Israel announced plans this week to push on with 2,129 new settler homes -- the vast majority in annexed east Jerusalem.

The last round of direct peace talks broke down just weeks after they were launched in September 2010 in a bitter row over settlements.

In a bid to defuse the latest crisis, Kerry phoned Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas late on Tuesday, a senior Palestinian official told AFP.

So far, both sides have remained silent over the agenda for the negotiations, while committing themselves to give the talks at least nine months in which to reach an accord.



This photo shows the bulk carrier Trans Summer on its side before sinking off Hong Kong in a strong typhoon yesterday. The 21 crew members of the Trans Summer abandoned ship as the vessel tipped on its side and sank, 80 kilometres southwest of Hong Kong, triggering a rescue that saw them plucked from rough seas by two helicopter teams and a passing ship.

PHOTO: AFP

PAK INDEPENDENCE DAY Celebratory gunfire kills one, wounds 32

AFP, Karachi

At least one person was killed and more than 30 wounded in Karachi yesterday as hundreds of people fired guns in the air to celebrate Pakistan's Independence Day.

An AFP reporter in the city witnessed heavy aerial firing after clocks struck midnight, as thousands of revellers came out onto the streets to celebrate the 66th anniversary of the creation of Pakistan.

At least 33 people were brought to Jinnah Hospital in Karachi after being wounded by stray bullets, a hospital official said.

Flag-raising ceremonies were held in Islamabad and all four provincial capitals as well as in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, where tensions with neighbouring India are running high.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was the chief guest on Wednesday at the ceremony in Islamabad also attended by visiting UN chief Ban Ki-moon.

Taliban militants kidnap female Afghan MP

AFP, Ghazni

Taliban militants have kidnapped a female Afghan member of parliament, officials said yesterday, in the latest example of prominent women being targeted in the country.

Fariba Ahmadi Kakar and her three children were taken at gunpoint on Saturday in the central province of Ghazni on the main highway from Kandahar city to Kabul.

"The security forces released her children (two girls, one boy) in an operation on Monday. But she has been kept in another location, we are still searching for her," Mohammad Ali Ahmadi, deputy governor of



Fariba Kakar

Ghazni, told AFP. "The town elders are also involved in talks with the kidnappers to secure her release," he added, giving no further details about the identity of the kidnappers.

A parliamentary spokesman said it was the first time an Afghan MP -- male or female -- had been abducted in 10 years.

Haji Zaman, a Ghazni elder involved in the negotiations, told AFP that local Taliban were involved in the kidnapping.

Kakar, who was returning to Kabul after the Eid ul-Fitr holidays when she was captured, was elected in 2005 as an independent member of the lower house after previously working as a teacher.

Indo-Pak ties under strain New Delhi passes anti-Pak resolution; blame-game intensifies as cross border shelling continues

AFP, Srinagar

India passed a resolution in parliament yesterday condemning Pakistan's "unprovoked attack" on its soldiers in Kashmir last week that left five dead, amid rising tensions between the rival neighbours.

The resolution, which followed a similar one passed in Pakistan's parliament one day earlier, came as firing and shelling continued from both sides of the de facto border that divides the disputed Himalayan region.

"It is unfortunate that Pakistan chose to indulge in such unprovoked attacks at a time when efforts were being made to establish a long-lasting framework of peaceful, friendly and co-operative ties..." the resolution passed unanimously by the Indian parliament's lower house said.

Tensions have heightened between the nuclear-armed neighbours since the August 6 ambush along the heavily militarised Line of Control (LoC), puncturing hopes of a resumption of stalled peace talks.

India's government has blamed Pakistan's army, but Pakistan has denied involvement of its soldiers in the ambush, the deadliest such incident along the LoC since the two countries agreed to a ceasefire in 2003.

Pakistan's prime minister pledged yesterday to respond to the rising tensions in Kashmir with "restraint and responsibility"

as officials accused India of killing a civilian by firing across the border.

"Pakistan will continue to respond to the situation with restraint and responsibility in the hope that steps will be taken by India to reduce tensions," Nawaz Sharif told a press conference in Islamabad.

The ambush of the Indian soldiers has sparked a series of skirmishes between the two armies across the 740-kilometre-long (460-mile) LoC.

Both countries claim Kashmir in full and the region has been the cause of two of their three wars.

Pakistani military officials said "unprovoked Indian shelling" across the LoC had killed a 60-year-old man and injured his teenage daughter.

The Indian army, for its part, accused Pakistan of firing across the LoC on Tuesday evening, adding

that there were no casualties on the Indian side. Indian officials are concerned, however, that Pakistan wants to redeploy militants back into Indian Kashmir as the war in Afghanistan comes to an end - a charge dismissed as nonsense by Pakistan's government which denied backing any militants.

The tense mood has spread far beyond the heavily militarised front line. In Islamabad, there has been talk that Pakistan might scale down its diplomatic presence in India although the foreign ministry would not comment on the speculation.



'No place' for sexism in Australia: PM

AFP, Sydney

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd yesterday said there was "no place" for sexism, racism or homophobia in Australia as election rival Tony Abbott laughed off his touting of a candidate's sex appeal.

Abbott came under fire after praising the female conservative colleague while campaigning in western Sydney on Tuesday, renewing debate over misogyny in Australia which raged during former leader Julia Gillard's time in office.

Rudd, who ousted Gillard as Labor leader in June, condemned the remarks.

"If any male employer stood up in a workplace anywhere in Australia and pointing to a female staff member, said, 'This person is a good staff member because they've got sex appeal', I think people would scratch their heads at least and I think the employer would be finding themselves in serious strife," he told reporters.

India makes Barak national waterway

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

In a move that could have implications for India-Bangladesh cooperation in waterways sector, Rajya Sabha, the upper House of Indian parliament, yesterday passed a bill to declare the 121-km stretch of Barak River in north-eastern state of Assam as National Waterway.

The move is aimed at unified development of waterways for shipping, navigation and transportation of cargo to the north-eastern region of India.

The National Waterway (Lakhimpur-Bhanga Stretch of the Barak River) Bill, 2013 to develop the Barak River stretch as country's sixth National Waterway would particularly benefit northeastern states of Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh by facilitating cargo movement there.

Shipping Minister G K Vasan, who moved the bill for passage, said the project will entail an investment of Rs 123 crore and would be completed in two phases in five years.

"The waterway has the potential to transport 12.45 lakh tonne of cargo like tea, coffee, iron, steel and coal per annum after its development by 2018-19," Vasan said.

The first phase of the project would be completed by 2016-17 followed by the second phase which is likely to be completed by 2018-19.

Replying to members queries, he said the country has already five National Waterways covering a length of 4,382 km of which infrastructure has been developed for initial three while the process is on for the remaining two.

A parliamentary committee, to which the bill was referred last year, had recommended extending the waterways to Chittagong to provide a hassle-free movement of cargo saying, "have a water protocol with Bangladesh would open immense possibility of cargo movement from India particularly from North Eastern region."

Lawmaker D Bandopadhyay (Trinamool Congress) also stressed yesterday for a protocol with Bangladesh, to which Vasan said five such protocols already exist.